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# The Catalyst



**The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks**

Winter 2002/3

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## Even in Lean Times Grant Money is Available

**By Michelle Edwards**

There are days when even the most ardent interpreters can get discouraged. Those chronic little annoyances like inadequate funding, staffing, facilities, equipment, materials (well, you know) conspire to impede our progress and suck out all our energy. And the situation will likely worsen as a result of the growing state budget deficit.

But there's hope! We can take some comfort in the fact that people value what we do; the recent passage of Proposition 40 (parks bond) provides evidence of that. More proof comes from the fact that, even during these lean times, hundreds of organizations have grant money available to support environmental and educational causes.

During the past year the Interpretation and Education Division staff has been successful in partnering with other organizations to obtain grants and other types of assistance to help parks throughout the state serve their customers more effectively.

One success story benefits teachers and students through a program that links state parks with schools via a high-speed network called the Digital California Project. Three pilot districts are currently participating in the project, Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students. PORTS will require funding from various sources. The fundraising effort is underway. The largest single gift so far, \$46,000, was a grant from CENIC, the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California. Several companies, like PolyCom, are donating or loaning video conferencing equipment. Additional assistance comes in

the form of equipment and services made available by school districts. For example, the Sacramento County Office of Education is providing connectivity and equipment for the California State Railroad Museum and the State Capitol Museum to allow them to provide interpretive programs to schools. If our department had to purchase these services ourselves, we would spend over \$40,000 in 2003.

Another example of successful grant seeking was a \$38,000 grant to the California State Parks Foundation from the Thomas J. Long Foundation for the expanded Junior Ranger program. Smaller grants were pieced together to support other interpretive programs. For example, \$5,000 from the California Integrated Waste Management Board is earmarked for Litter-Getter brochures. This will accompany another \$5,000 from the State Parks Foundation for Litter-Getter bags. Thanks to this outside funding we will be able to purchase supplies for both Litter-Getters and Junior Rangers this year. We have received smaller grants for our volunteer program as well. The State Parks Foundation recently donated \$2,000 for volunteer name badges.

So get online and begin your search. You might start with the Grantsmanship Center at [www.tgci.com](http://www.tgci.com) or the Independent Sector at [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org), or visit your local nonprofit resource center or library. When you have narrowed your search, you can request assistance with grant writing from the Administrative Research Services office at headquarters at (916) 654-1003. And be sure to follow up with any donors to let them know that their support is appreciated and being used for a worthwhile purpose.

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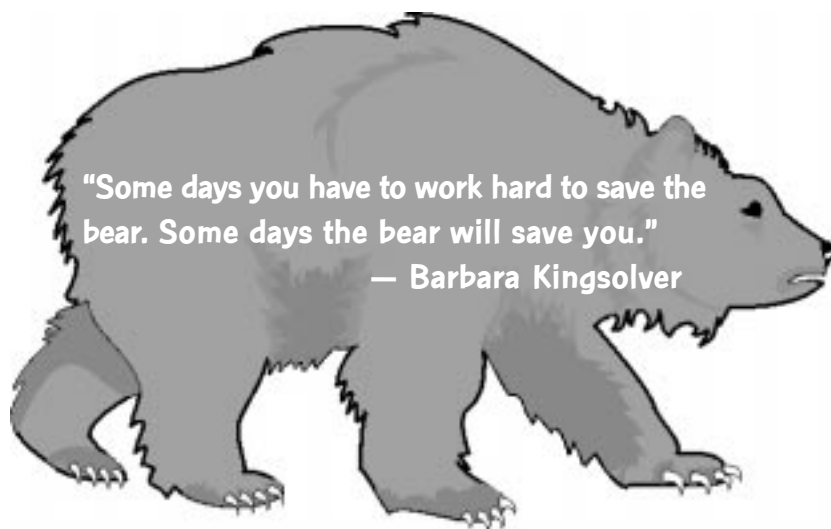
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## Contributor's Guidelines

*The Catalyst* welcomes your original articles of any length! Or, send copies of stories published elsewhere that you think our readers will appreciate. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time.

We **really** appreciate articles submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most formats of DOS/Windows disks. Printed manuscripts, facsimile or phone messages are also accepted. Please advise if you would like your diskette returned, otherwise we will recycle it in our office to save postage.

Illustrations are strongly encouraged. Drawings, graphs or other illustrations may be submitted on disk or hard copy. Black & white glossy photos are preferred; color prints or slides are usually acceptable. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly.



## The Catalyst Committee

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# From the Editor

Yeah, there's doom and gloom aplenty in state government these days. But in spite of all that, these are exciting times for interpretation. The next twenty pages will explain what's up. We've also included a couple of stories that just might make you think a little. Plus, we hope we have included a bunch of things you can actually use during these challenging times.



Just turn this page for a batch of fresh interpretive resources and training opportunities. And on page 4 you will find the Master Interpreter presiding as usual, offering gratuitous advice to the interpretively challenged.

I think you will enjoy the piece by Ranger Gary Olson on page 6. Gary, a Ranger at Torrey Pines, shares what it felt like when he spoke to a group of Native American students and elders from the local reservation.

Page 7 brings "The Road Well Traveled" by Diane McGrath, reporting on her travel to some exceptional interpretive sites. Diane is an Interpreter III from Hearst Castle® and can be reached at [DMCGR@parks.ca.gov](mailto:DMCGR@parks.ca.gov).

"Meeting the Training Challenge" on page 8 updates us all on the statewide Interpretive Program Improvement Team. Written by Jonathon Williams, he can be reached at [JWILL@parks.ca.gov](mailto:JWILL@parks.ca.gov).

Jenan Saunders tells about the launch of the long-anticipated project to videotape interpretive programs. Jenan is coordinating this project and can be reached at [JSAUNDERS@parks.ca.gov](mailto:JSAUNDERS@parks.ca.gov).

Page 10 announces the upcoming sesquicentennial of Fort Humboldt. Edie Carhart, an Interpreter I there, shares her plans. She can be contacted at [ftthum@humboldt1.com](mailto:ftthum@humboldt1.com).

On page 11 I am pleased to bring you a review of a book I enjoyed recently, *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell. I recommend it to each of you.

Joe von Herrmann tells us all about the new training CD on school "content standards." If you haven't seen this program, it is well worth your time to seek it out. Joe would love to hear from you at [JVONH@parks.ca.gov](mailto:JVONH@parks.ca.gov).

And don't forget to mark the date on your calendar for the April California Parks Conference. Page 13 brings a preview.

Page 14 announces the publication of the latest results of our ongoing School Group Program Evaluation Program. Jenan also coordinates this project and can be reached at [JSAUNDERS@parks.ca.gov](mailto:JSAUNDERS@parks.ca.gov).

Some of you will be able to use "Advice for Planning Interpretive Trail Signs and Exhibits." Laura Westrup of our Planning Division shares some Top Tips for Successful Signs on page 16 and 17. Laura can be reached at [LWESTR@parks.ca.gov](mailto:LWESTR@parks.ca.gov).

Karen Beery and Nancy Mendez from the Southern Service Center follow-on from their piece in the last issue on exhibit evaluation. Give them a call at (619) 688-6105.

Check out the National Interpreter's Workshop on page 20. Next year the workshop will be closer to home, and perhaps you should be there too!

On page 22 you will find a piece by Jamie Mendez, part of her ongoing series, "The Road Less Traveled." Jamie is a Guide I at Hearst Castle;® you can email her at [taquish@att.net](mailto:taquish@att.net).

And you'll find an intriguing segment in "California's Tapestry," back in its usual place.

Thanks to each of you for reading *Catalyst*! And special thanks for your comments and suggestions. We always appreciate hearing from our readers. 🐾

**Brian Cahill, Editor**

# What's Up?



## Interpreters' Resources

### Teach the River

The California Department of Fish and Game and the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust present the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual *Teach the River* Symposium in Clovis, CA (near Fresno). Be a part of this river experience February 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003. You can select from a multitude of workshops and fieldtrips. See: [www.riverparkway.org](http://www.riverparkway.org). The cost for the two-day symposium is \$75.00. There are \$50.00 scholarships available to the first 200 people to sign up. Enrollment is limited, so don't delay! Please call Liliane at 559-248-8480 ext. 110 to register.

### Outdoor Ed Conference

February 14-17, 2003 - Cuyamaca Outdoor School, Descanso, California. For more information, visit: <http://rainclouddpub.com/roee/conference/index.html>

### EE Fundamentals Course Online

The Fundamentals of Environmental Ed course will be offered via the Internet by the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point starting February 17th and will run for eight weeks. Non-resident tuition has been waived by UW Stevens Point to make this course available to a national audience. For more information, please contact Sarah Wilcox at 715-346-4958, or see: <http://www.eetap.org/eecourse/>



### NIW 2003

November 11-15, 2003, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, Nevada. See: [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com)

### Grant Opportunity

Pathways To Nature, a partnership between Wild Birds Unlimited retail stores and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, seeks to award one grant of up to \$200,000 for an education exhibit or wildlife watching structure or tour at major nature tourism destinations for birders. Send a brief project description to Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation at [stangel@nfwf.org](mailto:stangel@nfwf.org). There is no deadline, and full applications will be distributed by invitation only. <http://www.pathwaystonature.com/>

### Exploring Biodiversity

This new online interactive exhibit from the Natural History Museum in London helps younger students begin to learn about the nature of biodiversity. Other resources on the site include a glossary of important terms related to biodiversity and a feature where visitors can look up species by common name, genus, and other categories. See: <http://internt.nhm.ac.uk/eb/index.shtml>

### Census Info

Want to know more about your audience? Check out the 2000 census for free at <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>.

### Linus Pauling's Notebooks

OSU Library's special collections division just released a digital version of the research notebooks of this Nobel laureate. See [www.osulibrary.orst.edu/specialcollections/rnb/index.html](http://www.osulibrary.orst.edu/specialcollections/rnb/index.html)

### Wilderness Book

The standard reference book *Wilderness Management* has just released a revised 3<sup>rd</sup> edition with the latest in wilderness stewardship. At bookstores everywhere, \$65.

### Acorn Naturalists Growing

The leading science and nature catalog company, Acorn Naturalists has just completed its new Center for Science and Environmental Education. Stop by to browse the retail store in Tustin and you'll find a wealth of ideas for Jr. Rangers. See [acornnaturalists.com](http://acornnaturalists.com) or (800) 422-8886.



Acorn Naturalists new Center for Science and Environmental Education

# Dear Master Interpreter

## Dear Master Interpreter,

I wonder if you would address my pet peeve — uniform shirts with empty badgeholders. Far too many interpreters forget to remove the badgeholder from their uniform shirts. It may be a small point, but for my money, interpreters with empty badgeholders show a less than professional image. Can you encourage interpreters to take them off?  
Nit Picker

## Dear Nit Picker,

Good point, I'll be happy to help spread the word. *Interpreters, remove the badgeholders from your uniform shirts unless you wear a badge!* If you ask when you buy a new shirt, the uniform company may be willing to take it off for you. Try to remove it as soon as you get a new shirt and it will be less likely to show. Sometimes a faint outline is left behind; if so, dampen that area and smooth it with an iron.

MI

## Dear Master Interpreter,

We have an old slide program we show to groups every year when the eagles return to our park. This year there is some kind of glitch with the cassette synch player and I am starting to wonder about just converting the whole thing to PowerPoint and updating it slightly. What do you think, would this be worth the



trouble? Is it time to switch, or should we just put a band-aid on the old National Wildlife Federation slide show and get another year or two out of it?

Pondering Possibilities

## Dear PP,

That's a tough call, but here are a couple points to consider. Do you have all the equipment you will need to dedicate to the PowerPoint presentation? For starters compare the equipment costs between options. Also consider the intellectual property considerations. You may need to secure permission to use parts of the old program in your new presentation. This can take time. Good luck!  
MI

## Dear Master Interpreter,

Our co-op association is very tight with its funds. The board is very rigid about what they consider to be "interpretation" and they will not fund any park request that does not fit their view of interpretation. How can I get them to loosen up?

Seeking Funds

## Dear Seeker,

You didn't mention what exactly you wanted, so thank goodness I am spared from offering a judgment on any particular item. But keep this in mind: Your co-op's crucial tax-exempt status requires it to operate within its stated purpose. Take another look at the Articles of Incorporation. Review the co-op's official purpose and then try to make your requests clearly support this. Make it easy for the association to approve your request,

don't ask it to stray from its interpretive purposes, no matter how worthy your goal.

MI

## Dear Master Interpreter,

Every week we do a short ranger talk at the outdoor school in our park. I think it is very important for us to reach the students with a park interpretive message, but the school can only give us 10 minutes out of their busy schedule and it comes right before recess when the kids have a hard time paying attention. What can I do to convince the school to give us a better time slot?

Frustrated Interpreter

## Dear Frustrated,

Don't give up. Look for better ways to make use of what you've got. If you have 10 minutes and a group of kids who are ready to play, then for heaven's sake don't expect them to sit still while you lecture to them. Build your key concepts into a game and turn your problem into an opportunity.

Exciting new interpretive research underscores how effective it can be to teach a key interpretive concept through a game. Interpretive audience members have been shown to remember games (and the concepts embedded within them) clearly, even years later. I know that if I were Camp Director, I would be hesitant to give my audience to a ranger if he seems to have trouble holding the attention of the kids, no matter how important his message.

MI

# Fear and Loathing at Torrey Pines State Reserve

**Gary Olson, Ranger  
Torrey Pines State Reserve**

It was a beautiful day at Torrey Pines State Reserve, the sun was shining, the warm sea breeze was blowing gently through the trees, and the birds were chirping as they flew overhead. It was another perfect day in paradise, yet I was nervous about the program I was about to present.

Over the years I have given hundreds of presentations, but today was different. A group of school-aged Native Americans and elders from the local reservation were coming to hear a presentation about the maritime activities of their forefathers. I felt self-conscious and concerned about my lack of scientific knowledge of the subject matter. I had reviewed my notes and flipped through books trying to brush up on my facts, but it seemed hopeless. I was about to make a fool out of the State and myself by presenting a bad program.

My stomach felt like I swallowed a field of butterflies, and my mouth was as dry as the beach sand. I kept pacing back and forth through the visitor center. I asked myself over and over: How was I going to make this program sound professional and enjoyable if all I could think about was getting the facts straight and wondering if I would unintentionally insult someone through my ignorance?

Then the moment was upon me; the group arrived and they were coming toward me. I felt like this could be my last stand at Torrey



*A group of school-aged Native Americans and elders from the local reservation enjoy a program about the maritime activities of their forefathers presented by Ranger Gary Olson.*

Pines. I took a deep breath and walked over to greet the visitors. The greetings went well and I quickly organized the group among the benches of our amphitheater.

But now I panicked. All of the facts that I was trying to memorize faded into the dust and every eye was focused on me. There was a long moment of silence in which I could hear the wind rustling the pine needles. I began to sweat, the fear was setting in, I was not sure if I opened my mouth that any sound would come out.

The next thing I knew was that the program was coming to the end and I needed to conclude with a strong message. I had been talking and asking questions, trying to get the group involved for almost thirty-five minutes, and everyone was still looking at me.

A sense of relief penetrated my

mind as I asked the group to think about how their forefathers and elders guided the tribe. I began to relate how the goals of their ancestors were similar to the goals of the State Park Service, in so far as we try to protect the earth, the resources, and the plants and animals that we share this beautiful location with. At the end of the presentation, I was excited about the program, and the elders complemented me on the program.

We exchanged business cards and discussed future programs where we could work together to create a better understanding of their rich traditions and culture, as well as provide interpretive opportunities open to the general public.

Remember to relax, take a deep breath, and find the ideas or concepts that relate to your audience. If you can follow these simple guidelines, your programs will be successful. 🐾



# The Road Well Traveled

By Diane McGrath  
Interpreter III, Hearst Castle®

In November I had the opportunity, thanks to Friends of Hearst Castle, to visit several historic sites in the east and then attend the National Interpreters Workshop in Virginia Beach.

As the manager of the complex tour program at Hearst Castle®, it was an ideal opportunity to see how other large estates in the east handle their interpretive challenges.

I visited Winterthur Estate and Gardens, the DuPont home in Delaware, Mount Vernon and Monticello, George Washington's and Thomas Jefferson's estates, respectively, in Virginia, Biltmore, the George Vanderbilt estate in Asheville, North Carolina (the largest private home in the United States - Hearst Castle® is the second-largest), and Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.

I made prior arrangements and met with various staff members at each site. I am currently doing



*George Washington's estate at Mt. Vernon*

long-range planning for our Guide training, and was particularly interested in how these other sites conduct their interpretive staff training. I was warmly received and generously given information on any topic I inquired about during my visit. Most places even had a large envelope of information for me to take back.

Each site had its own character and solution to the challenges it faces. The Hearst Castle® staff was by far the largest interpretive staff of any of the places I visited, and we also have the most complicated and well-oiled tour schedule of any of these sites.

I didn't realize until I delved deeper that all the sites I had planned to visit are private entities. They all have foundations created to manage the properties. Some have endowments, some don't. This allowed complete oversight of the entire visitor experience, something we in State Parks are not able to do. It also results in a rather insulated world view.

Unfortunately, most of the people I met with were not planning to attend the NIW, and quite a few of them had never heard of NAI. Hopefully I was able to at least introduce them to the concept that a national organization for interpreters exists.

I learned a great deal from my visit, and met some wonderful, dedicated people. My overall impression, though, was we are doing an excellent job here at the Castle, and I believe we have a superior product to offer the public at a reasonable price. 🐾



*Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.*

## Interpretive Performance Improvement Team (IPIT)

# Meeting the Training Challenge

By Jonathan Williams

In the last several years the Department has made a concerted effort to improve the interpretive training it conducts. How has this taken place and what can employees contribute to this process of continuing improvement?

In 1998 a core group of interpreters from the Division of Interpretation and Education, the Mott Training Center and the field formed a team that would focus on meeting the needs of improving interpreters' performance through training. From the beginning, IPIT has forged new trails by evaluating training and following through on recommendations on improving classes offered at the Mott Training Center and other locations.

Significant progress has been made in having the classes focus on the current trends and needs at the field level. A major change has been the redesign of the former Continuing Interpretation program. To be more effective, the class was split into specific sections of Cultural, Natural and Recreational Interpretation. This change has had a positive impact on the type and professionalism of interpretation offered to our visitors. Future improvements are planned for the new Natural Resource Interpretation program and the newly reformatting Interpretation in Recreation Areas class which will be offered in March 2003.



*Meet the statewide IPIT. Pictured (L to R): Broc Stenman, Wes Chapin, Joanne Redouble, Donna Pozzi, Jonathan Williams and Michael Green. Members not in photo: John Quirk, Elizabeth Hammack, Al Pepito and Dave Gould.*

Currently IPIT is actively involved with Mott Training Center staff to develop a "Basic Interpretive Handbook" that will be used primarily for Basic Visitor Services Training but will also be invaluable for all entry level interpreters. Modeled after the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) training modules, this handbook will be supplemented with a Instructors Guide and Student Workbook. Developed by contractors from Humboldt State University, the outcome will benefit all interpreters in State Parks.

The team has recently named Michael Green as "ombudsman" for the committee. Michael will communicate with field staff on their needs

and concerns, bringing that information back to the committee so that IPIT can review the issues and make appropriate changes to the training. Michael can be reached at (916) 324-0312 ext. 207#.

Current members of IPIT are: Donna Pozzi, Broc Stenman, Al Pepito, Wes Chapin, Dave Gould, Elizabeth Hammack, Joanne Redouble, John Quirk, Michael Green and Jonathan Williams. The team is interested in receiving feedback and input from all Department interpreters. Please contact any of these members if you have ideas for improving interpretive training or the ways we translate training into job performance. 🐾



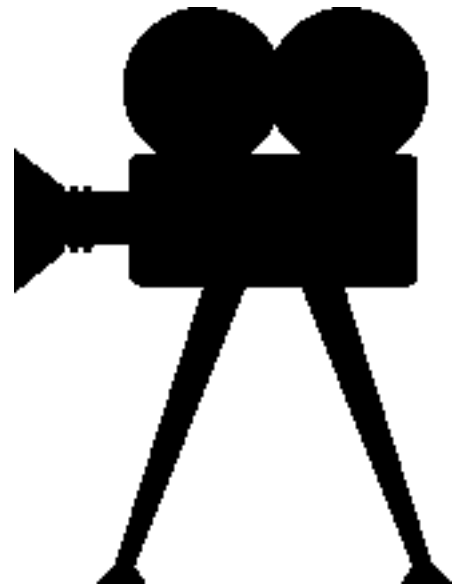
# Videotaping Interpretive Programs Project Gets off the Ground

by Jenan Saunders

After many months of preparatory work, the project to videotape interpretive programs in our parks has finally gotten underway. The Interpretation and Education Division, working with over 50 park staff throughout the state (known as on-site park representatives, or OSPRs, for purposes of this project), is coordinating this program, which will result in the creation of 80 videos of tours in 70 of our parks. With the assistance of the OSPRs, we've been able to provide basic information on each tour (well, almost all of them) to our three contractors who are doing the filming and production of the videos. Scheduling of film dates began last month, and we've already had four filmed to date.

For those readers who may not be aware of the background on this project, it resulted from the designation of deferred maintenance funds for the purpose of making some of our interpretive programs temporarily compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). When the videos are produced, they will be available to visitors who may not be able to participate in the actual tours due to mobility impairments.

Additionally, visitors with hearing impairments may prefer to watch the videos because they will be captioned. We also foresee that many visitors will appreciate watching the videos on days when inclement weather or low staffing prohibit park personnel from



conducting actual tours.

***Videos will be available to visitors who may not be able to participate in the actual tours due to mobility impairments.***

The draft videos of tours at Weaverville Joss House and Shasta SHP (led by Jack Frost), Bidwell Mansion (led by Judy Crain), and Crystal Cove Historic District (led by Ken Kramer and Laura Davick) have all been submitted by the contractors and excitedly reviewed by division staff, who are thrilled with the high quality of the interpretation evidenced in the videos.

conducting actual tours.

Finally, using the videos for internal training purposes and for programs that park staff put on outside the park itself is a possibility. As an added bonus, the products of this project include not only the finished videos but all original film footage shot by the contractors, which could be used for other video

projects in the future.

The entire project is scheduled to be finished by June 2004, but videos will be produced and distributed to park units as they are filmed and edited over the next eighteen months. Because State Parks will own all rights to the videos, we will also be able to put the transcripts of all videos, as well as short clips from them, on the internet and could provide advance copies to teachers scheduling school group tours.

Other options, such as providing copies to local schools and libraries, may also be explored. If you have questions about this project, please feel free to contact Jenan Saunders, (916) 653-0768, [jsaunders@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jsaunders@parks.ca.gov). 🐾

# Fort Humboldt Sesquicentennial

By Edie Carhart  
Interpreter I

On February 1, 2003, a flag raising ceremony will be held on the bluff at Fort Humboldt to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its establishment. On February 2, 1853, Sergeant Joseph Snedden raised the first flag to fly above Humboldt Bay, signifying the presence of the U. S. military in a remote region of California.

That original flag will be on display in the Fort Museum courtesy of the Redwood Forest Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Eureka High School Naval Junior ROTC students will provide the color guard, and representatives from local organizations will attend, some in present day uniform and others in period costume of the 1850s.



*This early photo is the best known view of Fort Humboldt, on the bluffs above Eureka.*

***On February 2, 1853, Sergeant Joseph Snedden raised the first flag to fly above Humboldt Bay,***



*The original Fort Humboldt flag (with 36 stars) will be on display in the Fort Museum courtesy of the Redwood Forest Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.*

Fort Humboldt SHP is hoping to muster up some volunteers, "Friends of the Fort", to further celebrate the sesquicentennial by bringing Fort Humboldt Days back to life. This event was held for a number of years and then abandoned. It was a two-day living history program held at the Fort with exhibits and costumed volunteers. We are hoping to re-establish this event for the weekend of August 23-24, 2003.

For further information please call Edie Carhart at (707) 445-6567. 🐾

## Book Review

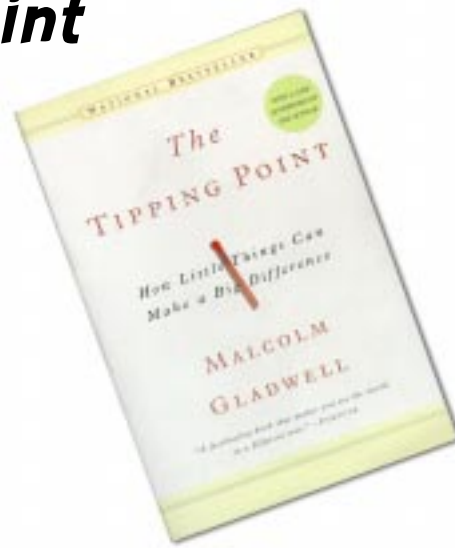
# The Tipping Point

By Malcolm Gladwell

\$14.95 Paperback

A fellow interpreter recommended this book to me so emphatically I thought I really ought to check it out. As soon as I began reading it, I too was immediately engrossed and could not stop babbling about it. It was one of the most interesting books I've read in ages, and I believe a *must* for every interpreter who really cares about his or her craft.

The so-called "tipping point" is based on what happens in a disease epidemic. And after all, don't we all strive to make our interpretive presentations contagious? This book considers "relatively simple changes in the presentation and structuring of information that can make a big difference in how much of an impact it makes."



world of the man who helped to create the Columbia Record Club to look at how messages can be structured to have the maximum possible impact on all their audiences. I'll take you to a high-tech company in Delaware to talk about the Tipping Points that govern group life and to the subways of New York City to understand how the crime epidemic was brought to an end there. The point of all of this is to answer two

Paul Revere's ride to illustrate how word-of-mouth travels. In part, he describes Paul Revere as the "man with the biggest Rolodex in colonial Boston." Another man rode out with the same information and had little or no effect — why?

The book is filled with the views of real people interviewed by Gladwell. They include scientists, marketing experts, TV show creators, and many others who personify the ideas expressed in the book. All of these ideas and principles are neatly tied together. I found that many seemingly illogical things were clearly explained in *The Tipping Point*. I now have a better understanding of why some popular children's TV shows are virtually unwatchable by adults, or why teenagers suddenly start dressing the way they do. In fact, it is amazing the way this book can be applied to so many of the important issues today.

***Why is it that some ideas or behaviors or products start epidemics and others don't? And what can we do to deliberately start and control epidemics of our own?***

Gladwell writes, "In pursuit of this radical idea, I'm going to take you to Baltimore, to learn from the epidemic of syphilis in that city. I'm going to introduce three fascinating kinds of people I call Mavens, Connectors, and Salesmen, who play a critical role in the word-of-mouth epidemics that dictate our tastes and trends and fashions. I'll take you to the set of the children's shows *Sesame Street* and *Blue's Clues* and into the fascinating

simple questions that lie at the heart of what we would all like to accomplish as educators, parents, marketers, business people, and policymakers. Why is it that some ideas or behaviors or products start epidemics and others don't? And what can we do to deliberately start and control epidemics of our own?"

Paul Revere turned his message into an epidemic. Gladwell analyzes

Gladwell argues, "We all want to believe that the key to making an impact on someone lies in the inherent quality of the ideas we present. But in none of these cases did anyone substantially alter the content of what they were saying. Instead they tipped the message by tinkering, on the margin, with the presentation of their ideas."

*The Tipping Point* is easy to read but its ideas are challenging. I also found it hopeful. Gladwell argues that it's the little things that make a difference in how our society works. If that's true, then we common folk can have a positive effect on the problems we face. *The Tipping Point* will restore your faith in the power of ideas. 🐾



# School "Content Standards" Training on CD

By Joe von Herrmann

Are your school group interpretive programs aligned with academic content standards? You may be asking yourself this question, or perhaps your supervisor has asked it. To help you answer "Yes" to this question the Interpretation and Education Division has produced a training CD titled "Integrating Academic Content Standards Into School Group Interpretive Programs."

Academic content standards are at the very heart of today's public education system in California. School field trips are coming under increasing scrutiny by school administrators to ensure that they provide material that helps the children learn the academic content standards. Public school teachers in the state are under intense pressure to ensure that their children perform well on standardized tests measuring their knowledge of the academic content standards. Teachers do not decide whether they will teach academic content standards or not. Rather, it is a requirement imposed by most school districts.

DPR has recognized the importance of integrating academic content standards into our school group interpretive programs. Early last year, all interpreters were directed by the Deputy Director of Park Operations to align their programs with academic content standards. Interpretive coordinators realized that just as teachers needed training when teaching academic content standards became a requirement, so too would field level interpreters need training to

comply with this directive. The District interpretive coordinators asked the Interpretation and Education Division to produce a CD that would help them train the field interpreters.

While the CD is primarily designed for a person leading a group training session, it can also be useful for individuals. The CD contains a self-running PowerPoint program that describes a process to integrate academic content standards into school group interpretive programs. It also contains full versions of all the academic content standards produced by the California Department of Education (CDE) as well as full versions of all "frameworks" (the CD explains the differences between and the uses of frameworks and standards). Included on the CD are CDE pamphlets for each grade that give an overview of that grade's academic

content standards. These are very helpful when preparing a program for a particular grade.

Approximately one hundred copies of the CD have been distributed throughout the Department. You can obtain additional copies by contacting Pam (Rocky) Rocksvold (916-653-0760 [procksvold@parks.ca.gov](mailto:procksvold@parks.ca.gov)).

If you have any questions or feedback after using the CD, please contact Joe von Herrmann (916-947-8073 [jvonh@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jvonh@parks.ca.gov)) or Jenan Saunders (916-653-0768 [jsaunders@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jsaunders@parks.ca.gov)). We have created a web page for the CD at [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=22193](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=22193). We will post commonly asked questions, fixes to bugs and other pertinent material on this page as we receive input from users. 🐾





# Parks Conference Planned

**By Karen Broderick  
Parks Conference Team**

You are invited to the 2003 Parks Conference at the Embassy Suites Tahoe Resort in beautiful South Lake Tahoe, March 31 through April 3. Active and retired professionals from city, county, special district, state, and federal agencies who perform duties in park, recreation, forestry, land management or other natural resource related fields, as well as students and others seeking careers in these fields are welcome. The conference is the perfect opportunity for professionals to learn new skills and exchange ideas with a diverse group of like-minded individuals. Spouses, friends, and other family members will also enjoy the location and the activities.

The Embassy Suites Tahoe Resort is the venue for the conference. Located at the base of Heavenly Ski Resort's new gondola and

next to world-class entertainment, the hotel features spacious rooms with excellent amenities, free cooked-to-order breakfast and evening beverages. Also, the facility is close to many outdoor recreational opportunities. Conference attendees receive a great discount from the normal room rate.

Conference registration packets will be mailed to PRAC and CSPRA members the first week of January. The packet will include details on the many diverse, educational, inspiring and fun opportunities there will be at this conference. The training sessions will include topics from different disciplines including interpretation, resource management, maintenance, law enforcement, and other aspects of public safety. There will be classes accredited by the Commission on POST, and 1 unit of college credit from West Valley College will be available. A job fair and vendor exhibit featuring exhibitors and employers of interest to conference attendees will

also be offered. There will be classes that meet learning domains from the PRAC recommended training standards for rangers. Field trips are being offered that take advantage of the season and the beautiful location. An evening dinner cruise on Lake Tahoe aboard the M.S. Dixie, followed by a campfire program on the beach will prove to be a memorable experience.

Consider attending this fun-filled and educational conference. Although the conference is presented by CSPRA and PRAC, you need not be a member to attend. Members do receive a discounted registration rate. Regular membership in CSPRA is open to any permanent California State Park employee. Regular PRAC membership is open to anyone with uniformed experience working for a city, county, state, special district, state, or federal agency dealing with park, forestry, recreation, wildlife refuge, land management, watershed, or lake areas. Student discounts and membership rates are available. Associate and supporting memberships are also available. For information on CSPRA and PRAC, visit their respective web sites at [www.cspira.com](http://www.cspira.com) and [www.calranger.org](http://www.calranger.org).

The conference is not expensive with full registration including the reception, quality general training sessions, two luncheons, and the banquet. Send your registration form in early to guarantee your place on the cruise and in the special sessions and field trips you want to attend. CSPRA & PRAC hope to see you at Lake Tahoe for what will be one of their best conferences ever! 🐾

Announcing the 2003 California Parks Conference

*"Honor the Past, Imagine the Future, Enjoy the Journey"*

SAVE THESE DATES

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Embassy Suites, South Shore Lake Tahoe

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Please join us at Lake Tahoe for a fun, informative and energizing time at the California Parks Conference. This is an opportunity for park professionals and career students to learn new skills. The high quality training sessions, field trips and POST courses will take advantage of one of the most beautiful, diverse and inspiring places on earth.

**To Receive a Free Conference Registration Packet:**  
call (800) 749-8749, or write PO Box 191269, Sacramento CA 95816-9998, or e-mail your mailing address to [parks2003tahoe@yahoo.com](mailto:parks2003tahoe@yahoo.com)




We'll See You at  
Lake Tahoe  
in 2003



Packets are mailed directly to all PRAC and CSPRA Members  
Sponsoring Partners: Park Rangers Association of California and California State Park Rangers Association

# The School Group Program Evaluation Survey

by Jenan Saunders

As most Catalyst readers are probably aware, for the past five years California State Parks has conducted an annual statewide School Group Program Evaluation survey (SGPE). The purpose of the SGPE is to assess the effectiveness of K-12 school group programs as determined by teachers who bring their students to our parks. The SGPE allows us to collect from teachers data and anecdotal feedback that will, ideally, give us insights we can use to improve our programs for school groups.

This year the Interpretation and Education Division produced a report that not only analyzes the results of this year's survey but compares results over the past five years. This report, entitled "Making the Grade: An Analysis of California State Parks' School Group Program Evaluation, 1998-2002," was distributed to all District Superintendents and District Interpretive Coordinators in early November. It is also available for viewing on the State Parks website, in the section under *Adventures in Learning* and on the *For Schools* page.

## Background

The SGPE was developed as a result of the State Legislature's interest in Performance Based Budgeting (PBB). California State Parks responded to the PBB challenge by establishing goals for Core Program Areas, identifying Interpretation as one of the Core Areas. The

outcome measure "Degree of congruity with educational curricula for educational experience for K-12" was established as one measure for this core area, and the SGPE has been our tool for assessing our performance on this outcome.

The survey form has remained essentially unchanged throughout the SGPE's five years. It asks teachers to give letter grades (A, B, C, D, and F) to the educational content of the program in the first five questions and

◆ To get feedback on what we're doing well and on how we can improve.

## How Are We Doing?

In analyzing our grade point average over the past five years, there are two ways of viewing the data: comparing average grades for each year and comparing grades for each question. In looking at our Grade Point Average (GPA) for all questions over the five years of the survey, we find that we've maintained a GPA in

***Two categories that received the highest number of comments were the quality of the interpreter/guide and the interactivity of the program.***

then to other issues (pre-trip information, logistics, accommodations, and safety) in the four questions on the second page. Teachers are also given an opportunity to provide written comments in response to a number of prompts.

There are three primary ways the survey results can be used by California State Parks to make improvements in our programs:

- ◆ To know if and how we're meeting teachers' needs, based on the grades teachers give in relation to certain questions;
- ◆ To know more about our audience in terms of grade level and what types of programs they're coming for; and,

the B+/A- range over all five years of the survey. Comparing the average of grades over all years by question yields some insights that could prove useful in making improvements to programs. Such a comparison readily conveys the fact that our pre-trip information could be improved.

Unfortunately, our second lowest scoring question is the one that deals with our use of current educational pedagogy, specifically active learning techniques, group learning, and sensitivity to diversity. If we are to target our resources in terms of improvements (which is an undeniable fact considering current budget constraints), a focus on improving pre-trip information for teachers

(which many parents and group leaders bringing children to parks may also appreciate) would seem to be appropriate. Additionally, we should provide more training, or at least periodic information through the interpreter email listserve and *Catalyst*, on current pedagogical trends (like building critical thinking skills, group learning, interactive techniques, etc.) to interpreters and guides who work with school groups.

### Who Is Our Audience?

If we assume that returned surveys are representative of the school group population as a whole, survey results can also show us the grade levels of classes coming to our parks and what types of programs they're attending. 43% of returned surveys identified their classes as being made up of 4<sup>th</sup> graders. After 4<sup>th</sup> graders, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders make up another 30%. High school students are by far our smallest group, which makes sense considering the greater restraints placed on teachers trying to manage taking students out of multiple courses to be able to go on a field trip. Results from the 2002 survey were also tallied in relation to the types of programs the teachers filling out the surveys indicated they had attended. Because this item was a write-in answer, the data may not accurately reflect the actual nature of the programs given, but still lends useful insights. Given this constraint, it appears that the majority of programs school groups come to our parks to experience focus on cultural history—70% of respondents versus 22% for natural history programs.

### What Can We Do Better and How?

By generally categorizing the comments received from teachers who returned surveys in 2002, we can make some suppositions about what we can be doing to continue delivering high quality programs to school groups and even improve them. One write-in prompt on the survey asked respondents to identify the biggest contribution of each program to their students' education.

The two categories that received the highest number of comments were the quality of the interpreter/guide and the interactivity of the program, or, as many teachers stated, its being "hands on." Obviously, many of our interpreters for school groups are doing a great job, and teachers realize the value of having an informed guide who can relate to students, a far different type of group than the standard visitor or commercial tour group. Providing more training for our interpreters and guides in the theories and techniques of working with school groups, especially primary and middle school students, will help improve the programs we



give in units that get a lot of visitation by such groups and could lead to greater visitation in those parks that aren't at this time receiving many school groups.

Additionally, building in more interactive exercises and hands-on experiences for our school group programs would certainly improve their effectiveness, as many teachers feel this is an important factor in student information retention.

In conclusion, California State Parks should be proud of the consistently high grades and positive anecdotal comments we get from teachers participating in the SGPE. But, like all endeavors, improvements can always be made, and the survey results of the past five years can help us target our efforts at improving both our programs and our evaluation process. Congratulations to all our staff who make our parks such a wonderful resource for teachers and students. If you have questions about the report or the SGPE in general, please contact Jenan Saunders, (916) 653-0768, [jsaunders@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jsaunders@parks.ca.gov). 🐾

## *Educating Trail Users –Advice for Planning*

# Interpretive Trail Signs and Exhibits

**By Laura Westrup**  
**State Parks Planning Division**

More funding for constructing interpretive trails is available today than ever before. The timely passage of Propositions 12 (2000) and 40 (2002) as well as government funding sources such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Recreational Trails Program, Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, and the Habitat Conservation Fund continue to support these worthwhile park improvements.

Ideally, interpretive signs or exhibits offer stories that are designed to stimulate trail visitors' interest while challenging their imaginations, and perhaps present new perspectives on familiar topics. Through the use of interpretive signage, the trail presents themes that enable visitors to understand more clearly the messages of history, the environment, or a nearly forgotten culture. Jonathan Williams, an interpretive manager with California State Parks, describes the indisputable worth of an interpretive trail: "It draws in the visitor, captures a curiosity, develops an interest, and leaves the visitor with an undeniable sense of place and a little bit more knowledge than he or she had before."

Remember trail visitors come in all shapes, sizes, ethnicities, and have an infinite range of interests and capabilities. School children, people with limited mobility, moms pushing strollers, bicycle riders, equestrians, joggers, walkers, and casual hikers –

many speaking different languages – visit interpretive trails. It's up to you as a park steward to instill a sense of appreciation for the story that needs to be told – the interpretive theme and messages of the trail must be well planned.

The trail planner assesses the likely audience and the primary messages while keeping in mind the location and design of the trail. In addition, the planner determines the best sign design and location to relay the messages to the public, and keeps in mind potentials for erosion, vandalism, visibility, public safety, and

Gold Discovery State Historic Park.

So where do you begin? Decide the primary 'theme' or story you want to present. An interpretive theme, according to Mr. Williams, "is one main idea, a distillation of the concepts that relate to and make up the story you wish to tell. When taken together, they should add up to something similar to chapters in a book and be arranged in a logical sequence." In arriving at a theme statement, planners should attempt to provoke interest and to capture the essence of what is to be interpreted.

***So where do you begin? Decide the primary 'theme' or story you want to present.***

disruption of the viewshed. Complementary trail features such as well-placed benches, drinking fountains, or viewing decks help enrich the visitors' experiences and should be considered in the project-planning phase.

There are two primary types of interpretive trails. One is designed for visitors to travel at their own pace, reading signs, viewing exhibits or following the narrative in a brochure. The other form is one that 'comes alive' with a docent or volunteer who offers opportunities for questions and answers. For example, volunteers lead interpretive walks for wildlife viewing along the American River Parkway in Sacramento County and at the living history program at Marshall

California State Parks has examples of interpretive signs in a catalog available for you to review, but there are many local recreation and park agencies willing to share their research, text, or illustrations with you as well.

A brief word on the trail itself – it can have many different surfaces – sand, brick, wood planks (especially useful in beach areas), decomposed granite, asphalt, concrete, or even be made of recycled tires, and it can vary in width and length. Your agency may consider the interpretive trail to be part of a larger, more complex transportation system or a short spur to tell the story of a valued natural resource. Whatever the length and



design complexity, the interpretive signs can be a major or a minor feature; it's your choice. Signs can be in upright kiosks that have panels full of narrative, illustrations and photographs or be as simple as a post with a number on it. Ask around – agencies have used a variety of materials, designs, and applications. You'll learn from their experiences and mistakes.

## Top Tips for Successful Signs

1. Know your audience. Design exhibits that are intuitive, that engage the visitors in ways that encourage them to learn something new. The success of your project may hinge on identifying who is presently using the park, who is not, and who should be encouraged to come.

2. See the trail as your visitor would. Think about your trail from your guests' perspective. For example, if it's to be designed for school-children, ask a nearby school administrator or teacher to help with the exhibit design and the educational messages.

3. Dangle a carrot. Draw visitors from one area of the trail to another by creating 'visual magnets'. For example, begin the story on one panel and conclude it on another one farther down the trail.

4. Use a clean design and use readable fonts. Illustrations may help represent a time period, a culture, spatial distances, a landscape, or an emotion – often capturing the imagination and explaining ideas without the use of words. Images selected for any interpretive project should engage visitors and fit themati-

cally, but not overwhelm the story or object. Note that certain images or the narrative itself may require the proper copyright clearances.

5. Avoid sensory overload. Resist the temptation to tell visitors too much. Tell one story at a time. Visitors don't have to learn everything there is to know about a subject at that very moment. Try instead to stimulate people and provide guidance for those who want to pursue the topic further.

6. Make the message fun. Engage visitors with amusing questions and answers, with nice-to-know tid-bits of information or with memorable quotes.

7. Maintain the panels. If a panel becomes scratched or is no longer readable, it becomes nothing more than an eyesore. Change the panels periodically to retain the interest of frequent trail users.

8. Good interpretation always relates the message to the audience, communicating in a way that is both understandable and provocative. A range of interactive, touchable, and sensory interpretive facilities and programs can help to reinforce written or audible information for many visitors. Consider developing text in other languages, Braille, and use large text font, 18-point minimum.

9. The cost of quality interpretive panels and exhibits will depend on your chosen method of presentation. Contact interpretive service and commodity providers to get an estimate of costs prior to development of the trail plan.

Finally, be realistic about the amount of staff time, money, and other resources needed to create the signs for your trail. Mr. Williams recommends "that you make a concerted effort to bring community members, such as volunteers or subject matter experts, into the design and review process." In the long run, this involvement can save time and money and may result in a better interpretive trail product to meet the needs of the community and visitors alike. 🐾

*For information about California State Parks panels, contact Jonathan Williams, [jwill@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jwill@parks.ca.gov) or Don Amos at [damos@parks.ca.gov](mailto:damos@parks.ca.gov)*

### Links to related sites:

*Advisory Council on Historic Preservation – [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)  
American Association for State and Local History – [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org)  
Association for Heritage Interpretation – [www.heritage-interpretation.org.uk](http://www.heritage-interpretation.org.uk)  
Association for Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums – [www.Alfam.org](http://www.Alfam.org)  
The American Cultural Resources Association – [www.acra-crm.org](http://www.acra-crm.org)  
Bureau of Land Management Environmental Education – [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)  
California Council for the Promotion of History – [www.csus.edu](http://www.csus.edu)  
California Historical Society – [www.californiahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org)  
California State Parks – [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)  
EPA: Office of Environmental Education – [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
Earthday Network – [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)  
National Association for Interpretation – [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com)  
National Park Service Cultural Resources Programs – [www.cr.nps.gov/whatwedo.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/whatwedo.htm)  
National Science Foundation – [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov)  
Rangers on the Web – [www.rangersontheweb.com](http://www.rangersontheweb.com)  
Recreation Opportunities on Federal Lands – [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)*

## Creating More With RAPPORT:

# Evaluating Interpretive Exhibits

By Karen Beery, Interpreter II and  
Nancy Mendez, Interpreter II,  
Southern Service Center

Okay, we won't tell anyone if you still don't know what RAPPORT\* means! However, in this article we want to get you thinking about how to create more with RAPPORT.... "What, more acronyms?" you may be asking yourself. Before your palms start getting sweaty and your heart begins racing furiously, we are just asking you to continue with us on our evaluation tool quest. [See "Exploring Evaluation Possibilities at Cabrillo," *The Catalyst*, Autumn 2002.]

Currently, our evaluation tool box is ***Aiming for Excellence: An Evaluation Handbook for Interpretive Services in California State Parks***, the award-winning handbook that introduced RAPPORT. The intent of the committee was to develop a handbook that would give park staff the ability to create an evaluation program that could be adapted to meet the unique needs of each park. To that end, ***Aiming for Excellence*** provides an overview for evaluating interpretive services and a variety of evaluation forms for presented interpretive programs.

In the current challenging fiscal climate, our visitors' interpretive experience in the parks may be even more dependant on self-guided, non-personal interpretation. Now is an important time to take a good look at the day-to-day interpretive exhibits that most of us probably take for granted. The faded wayside exhibits,

the out-of-date interpretive panels, and the dusty cases in the visitor centers. "Remember us?" they seem to be asking. How can we measure/evaluate their effectiveness?

***The involvement of experts can be viewed as a opportunity to network with professionals in the field.***  
— Aiming For Excellence

Collaborating with similar parks or institutions in an invigorating and rewarding way to enter into this realm of evaluation. Former State Park Interpreter I Brad Krey abandoned our interpretive ship this summer, he is now at the Birch Aquarium. To assure we would not loose Brad's expertise completely we set sail for establishing an interpretive collaboration with his new institution. During a recent meeting we had with their interpretive and exhibit staff we discussed exhibits and interpretive evaluations. Brad reported that he was adapting evaluation forms using RAPPORT to meet the interpretive evaluation needs at the Birch Aquarium. The aquarium's exhibit designer, David Krimmel, told us about the San Diego Evaluators Group (SDEG). We have attended three of their meetings and find the input regarding exhibit evaluation to be quite stimulating!

At the first SDEG meeting, Stephanie Weaver, Collections Interpretive Specialist at the San Diego Zoo & Wild Animal Park, introduced us to an evaluation project that is being developed by Beverly Serrell. Ms. Serrell, a museum consultant with 20 years experience and author of ***Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach***, is working on developing a framework for assessing museum exhibits. As luck would have it, the Museum Educators of Southern California presented a workshop in November by Ms. Serrell entitled "Judging Excellence in Museum Exhibitions from a Visitor Perspective." The information she presented in the workshop elaborated on her article published in the Spring 2001 issue of the ***Exhibitionist***. More information can be found at [www.excellentjudges.org](http://www.excellentjudges.org).

Beverly Serrell described four of the most commonly used methods of assessing exhibits as follows:

◆ **Reviews** typically contain excessive praise, ignore accountability to claimed communication goals, and employ descriptive rather than analytical methods.

◆ **Critiques** are opinions of informed professionals and consist of value judgments measured against "the doctrinal allegiance" of the critic.

◆ **Evaluations** rely on systematically collected feedback from visitors, looking for evidence that exhibition objectives were met.

◆ **Scoring** relies on measuring against pre-existing standards, criteria, evidence, or indicators.

While these are all valid, Ms. Serrell's Tool for Judging Excellence (TJE) seeks to define a set of criteria that can be generalized for all exhibitions, looks at exhibits from the visitor's point of view, is research-based in visitor studies and provides results that are widely shared and applicable.

The new framework that Ms. Serrell is developing takes a visitor experience perspective. "What can the visitor learn?" not "What did the visitor learn?" is the focus of this new approach. What affords a good learning experience for the visitor is the emphasis of this assessment. In other words, 1) intent doesn't count, and 2) the content isn't the point. Regarding this type of assessment, Ms. Serrell makes the point, "It's not a substitute for doing visitor studies, and it shouldn't stand alone as the only method used to review an exhibition. Rather it is a way to help us discuss exhibitions with a common and consistent means of comparison. It's a tool for encouraging peer group critical analysis of exhibitions from the receiver's point of view."

***The goal of the Tool for Judging Excellence is to stimulate discussion, not reach consensus or to create a score.***

During the November workshop, Ms. Serrell discussed five criteria that are being developed to assess exhibits from the visitor-experience perspective: Comfort, Competence, Engagement, Meaningfulness, and Satisfaction. Ms. Serrell explained: "The order [of the criteria] reflects, to an extent,

the sequence of the exhibition experience. There is some overlap, and the last one builds on the previous ones." The following is an overview of the criteria:

**1. Comfort – In an excellent exhibition, visitors feel comfortable – psychically and physically.**

Comfort covers a broad range of issues related to accessibility. Good comfort opens the doors to other positive experiences. Lack of comfort prevents them. Aspects include: Inclusion, pluralism, authority, "voice," attribution, accountability, orientation, wayfinding, ambiance, quality of execution, durability, intuitiveness.

**2. Competence – In an excellent exhibition, visitors feel intellectually competent.** Competence is a cognitive comfort that goes beyond accessibility. Aspects include: "Flow," levels of understanding, vocabulary, label content, visual content, density, "workload," juxtaposition, reinforcement, redundancy, integrity of the experience.

**3. Engagement – An excellent**

**exhibition is engaging for visitors.**

Engagement is largely an observable quality – what are people doing? Aspects include: Time spent, number of stops at elements, appropriateness of behaviors, social interaction, pacing, "energy," diverse modalities, provocation.

**4. Meaningfulness – An excellent exhibition is personally meaningful to visitors.** Beyond being engaged, visitors find themselves involved in immediate and long-lasting ways. Aspects include: Relevance, affect, constructivism, expectations met, connections made, cognition, inspiration, reflection, universal human concerns, soulfulness, "a-ha," an element of internal change.

**5. Satisfaction – An excellent exhibition is a satisfying experience for visitors.** This is the cumulative gestalt of the whole visit, influenced by factors that came before; the feelings you walk away with. Aspects include: Fulfillment, surprise, lasting impressions, personal recommendations, revisit, purchases, perceived value.

The goal of the TJE is to stimulate discussion, not reach consensus or to create a score. The point of using the tool is professional learning so we can create better visitor experiences. She also sees the tool as having potential for being included in the exhibit development process. We have launched efforts to use TJE with several of our projects. Armed with clipboards and copies of TJE we will be sailing through the Seahorses exhibit at the Birch Aquarium in January. We will report back in the next issue!

\*Everyone together now! Give us an R - relevant, give us an A - accurate, give us a P - provocative, give us another P programmatically Accessible, give us an O - organized, give us an R - retained, give us a T - thematic and what do you have - RAPPORT!!! (and hopefully, truly excellent interpretation!)🐬

# National Interpreters Workshop

California State Parks was well represented at this year's National Interpreters Workshop. Eleven of us from a broad cross-section of the Department made the trek to Virginia Beach, joining nearly 1200 other interpreters from all over. Here's what some of us had to say about the experience.

"Going to the NIW gives me an opportunity to mingle with people who are all in my same profession and understand the same jargon that I do. An impromptu conversation about exhibit design during a concurrent session reveals an entirely new idea that I can implement right away. It is the hundreds of little moments like this that make the NIW such a valuable program."

— **Barbara Baker,**  
**State Controllers Office**



*Sara Skinner, Guide I at Petaluma Adobe recieved an NAI regional scholarship to attend the workshop.*

"I attended a very informative workshop on a new and highly controversial form of recreation called "Geocaching." It was very relevant to my job and proved once again that interpretation goes a long way to encourage good stewardship of parks."

— **Linda McDonald, Assoc. Park & Rec Specialist, Planning Division**



*Joanie Cahill, Regional Interpretive Specialist, Anza-Borrego, presenting a well-attended session on leading campfire singing.*

"I came away from the National Interpreters Workshop humbled by the outstanding first-person interpretation that is taking place in our treasured historic sites. In the cradle of our nation's birth, the power of their stories brings alive what it took to create this great nation of ours."

— **Diane McGrath, Interpreter III, Hearst San Simeon SHM**

"Every time I attend the annual NIW I am amazed at the generosity and integrity of those in the interpretation profession. I seem to walk away every year with a few more life long friends and good suggestions for improving my programs. I am grateful for the opportunity to spend more time with California State Parks employees even if it means we have to go across the states to do this."

— **Sara M. Skinner**  
**Guide I, Petaluma Adobe SHP**



*Ellen Absher, Interpreter I at Mount San Jacinto, presented her visitor survey data at the poster session, chatting here with Karen Barrett during the busy workshop.*



"Each year at the National Interpreters Workshop, when I interact with as many NAI members as I possibly can, I am driven to an ever stronger commitment to our professionalism and to the service of my fellow members. I sense with NAI there is no end to accomplishment or gratitude; it was with that in mind that I became a life member. It is an organization worthy of growing with. If I can plant one seed in the fertile minds of our peers who still do not belong and have not participated, it is that."

**—Bill Lindemann, DIS Sierra  
NIW Chair for 2003 Reno/Tahoe**



*Karen Barrett, District Interpretive Specialist, Mendocino, Barbara Baker, State Controller's Office and Linda McDonald, Planning Division share a light-hearted moment decked out in sheep ears.*



*Bill Lindemann, District Interpretive Specialist, Sierra District, in his shepherd's garb, invites interpreters to next year's NIW.*

"The Best part(s) of the NIW Workshop were the sessions that provided specific information and ideas that I could take with me and use in my job, such as the "Night Sky" and "Creating a Site Newspaper" programs."

**— Ellen Absher, Interpreter1  
Mount San Jacinto SP**

"Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown, an historical interpreter's delight! The presentation at Gettysburg and Ford's Theater was so powerful it left everyone crying. My pre-workshop session on PowerPoint was great for any interpreter in a visitor center. I saw excellent first-person interpretation, incredible networking (and a great dance)!"

**— Mark Michalski, Ranger, Marshall Gold Discovery SHP**



*California State Parks was also well represented on the dance floor at the closing banquet!*

*The Road Less Traveled*

# What I Did On My Christmas Vacation . . .

By Jamie Mendez  
Guide 1, Hearst Castle®

BI (before internet) the first assignment on the first day of school after every school break was **"the essay."** It wasn't a book report you could whip up from the summary on a dust jacket of a book you hadn't read or a history report laboriously copied from an encyclopedia. Nooo — this was the assignment that struck terror into the hearts of students the nation over — an **original** essay.

***You had to read it in front of the whole class.***

As if that wasn't bad enough, the composition had to be in your own words and everyone had to write on the same topic — What I did on my (name the holiday) vacation. When the essay was finished you stood up in front of the whole class and the secret was out — you hadn't done anything interesting, let alone exciting, on your (name the holiday) vacation!

Unlike Jane's family, ours never had a family gathering at grandmother's big old two-story house. Aunt Cecelia never visited and brought us unusual gifts from her world travels and there was no Uncle Jimmy to entertain us with rollicking tales from his years with the Merchant Marine. There were no long walks in the woods with Grandpa on a crisp fall day nor any uncles to cheer their favorite team on Thanksgiving

Day while the aunts cooked and gossiped as they created the memorable feast. Ours was a nuclear family with no nearby relatives with whom to share holidays.

Well, what did I write about for those essays? As you might have guessed, I have always been rather creative — talking turkeys and variations on "over the river and through the woods" come to mind. Time passed, and so did this youthful

trial. I became the parent and it was my turn to create those lasting memories of childhood, but times had changed and I soon discovered that so had the way holidays were celebrated.

These holidays were — at least most of them — still on the same days they had always been, but that "special" meaning was gone. Stores open 24/7, single parent families, and the three-day holiday weekend had become the norm, not the exception.

Many children still spent at least part of their vacations with their extended family, but just as many now enjoyed a community Thanksgiving and Christmas off-roading or shuttling between parents' homes. If these kids had to write that essay about what they did on their (name the holiday) vacation, I'm sure it would be very

different from the ones I had written so many years ago. I have to admit that even my (name the holiday) vacation essay would be much different today than it was then.

Now I work on most of those (name the holiday) vacations because vacations and holidays are parks' and historical monuments' busiest seasons. It is no longer unusual for grandmothers to take the grandkids on an RV camping trip or for single parents to travel with their children during the holidays. What many kids today will do on their vacations is visit a park or an historical monument. Their vacation experience will be **your** tour, hike, or Jr. Ranger program. As an interpreter/tour guide, your holiday will be filled with eager shining faces, crying babies, restless toddlers, and bored teenagers.

Take a moment and think what these kids would write about in their (name the holiday) vacation essay. Will you have engaged that bored teenager, smiled as you answered the same childish question for the umpteenth time, or watched a small face light up with delight and understanding? Will you give these children great memories to cherish or just another three-day holiday? You will probably never see these children again, but the impression you make upon them may last a lifetime.

This (name the holiday) vacation season give the children on your tours, hikes, and Jr. Ranger programs something worth writing about — a wonderful memory! 🐾

# California's Tapestry

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## Do We Want to Do What We Did in the Past?

From *The Interpreters' Guide* published by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, August 1977. Section on Campfire Program Story, "The Brave Indian:" "Once there lived a Brave Indian in the forest. One day he decided to go hunt for a Lion (audience growls). So he took up his bow and arrow (have everybody follow your actions), and said goodbye to his wife (pat your mouth – 'Woo-Woo:' low for him and high for his wife). He went out and slammed the door (clap your hands), and he walked and walked and walked (slap thighs alternately with each hand, slap thighs whenever he walks)...."

This was one of the Department's best training publications, and after reading it again, I think it is still one of the best resources for a beginning Interpreter. Most of us would agree not to use "The Brave Indian" story or at least the part about "'Woo-Woo': low for him and high for his wife." In fact, it would have been inappropriate to use it in 1977.

When James Loewen was researching for his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, he found that many textbook authors just copied from the

previous edition, not updating or correcting wrong information.

The rest of the book is full of useful hints and ideas. So why can't we just use this 25-year-old publication, reprint it without "The Brave Indian"? Are we not teaching interpretive methods? Is not what was taught then about how to get a group's attention and how to conduct a hike still true?

***We have learned more about the most effective ways to reach people. The culture of our society, of California, has changed.***

Yes, but then, no. It is not just that the content is no longer appropriate. The methods and types of programs that we conduct also need to be reviewed. We have learned more about the most effective ways to reach people. The culture of our society, of California, has changed. The education level and skills of our staff and volunteers are higher.

Diversity has new meaning, and goals for relevancy and inclusion are at a different level. In addition, we

have learned new theories in areas such as multiple intelligences, learning through constructivism and need for critical thinking opportunities. We have new information on child development, learning styles, presenting to people with different disabilities, the needs of families, extended families, and single families. A current guide for interpreters would have to go far beyond how to give campfire programs, hikes and school group

talks. Other venues and kinds of presentations have to be included. Program development processes that involve communities beyond parks need to be taught so that we can address relevancy and diversity issues.

Traditional campfire programs and nature walks will continue in parks. However, let us not limit ourselves in how we can be effective. We do not want to be accused of simply copying how things were done in the past. A final quote from *The Interpreters' Guide*: "Interpretation should begin with entertainment and end with wisdom..." Josh Barkin. 🐾

Submit articles and comments to: Jack K. Shu, Park Superintendent, OCI- Southern California, c/o Southern Service Center, 8885 Rio San Diego Drive, San Diego 92108, Ph# (619) 220-5330.

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